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The Fallen Petals (Part I)

—Memories of my early reading life

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(1)

Professor Shôji Hirata has recently been studying the reading activities among Chinese. The present article is written at Professor Shôji Hirata's request. It covers my reading activities in a period from early childhood to early youth, that is, from the time of my primary education to the time of my graduate studies.

I was born in November 14, 1937 in the town of Quintong (溱潼) in Taixian (泰縣) County, Jiangsu (江蘇) province. Quintong is a small town surrounded by water and was at that time self-closed and very backward. Since I was a boy, my father taught me Chinese characters when I was still very young. At about the nominal age of six, I paid my respect to the picture of Confucius and began my study in an old-style private school (私塾). The major activity at the time was to memorize and recite *Sanzi Jing* (三字經). After few years, I changed to a new-style private school, and later was enrolled in Quintong primary school. I graduated in the fall, 1949 and that

was half year after the 1949 revolution.

In this part of the article, I concentrate my description on the folk custom in my hometown. In the description, I have sometimes adopted some dialectal expressions.

A study on Pan Yue's 潘岳 "Rhapsody on a
Westward Journey" (*Xi-zheng Fu* 西征賦)

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Though there are little points of similarity between a historical description and a literary work, they are to be distinguished. Why a literary work is to be a literary work?

Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on a Westward Journey" (*Xi-zheng Fu*), which is full of historical contents, has been categorized for *Xing-lü fu* 行旅賦 (travel) or *ji-xing fu* 紀行賦 (relating travel). It is generally known that *xing-lü fu* is one of the important subgenre of the lyricization of the *fu* in the Latter Han dynasty. And the pieces of this genre is rich in descriptive details and full of comments on historical figures and places. Certainly, *Xi-zheng Fu* is also a travelogue from Luoyang 洛陽 to Chang'an 長安 and takes over several elements of the *xing-lü fu*. However, in regard of this piece, as some scholars already have pointed out, it has the "epical" tendency. But, of course, this "epical" tendency is different from what we generally recognize as the epic. Here, this term includes a sense of *pu-chen* 鋪陳, which is peculiar to the Chinese Rhyme-Prose 辭賦. In detail, when Pan talks about the journey from Luoyang to Chang'an and wandering around Chang'an, he entirely describes the sights of them not by visible landscapes and views, but by invisible historical episodes. *Xi-zheng Fu* is mainly composed of the series of these historical contents.

Moreover, Pan Yue's self-consciousness unites those various units. Although such sentence structure which the poet himself talks about his own travelogue as a narrator appears to be similar to the *xing-lü fu* in the Latter Han dynasty, the way of describing himself is clearly different from them. Pan sometimes confesses that he has a shabby substance of meager talent (菲薄之陋質). Because of this

humbling himself here, the narrator itself only works as the function to be impressed by historical places and contents. Needless to say, such narrative system is greatly important to this historical narration. I have called this system “eyes for the past” 過去への眼差し. Because all historical narration are based on such self-consciousness, this piece has been able to be the grandest travel poem.

Li Bai au clair de lune

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Dans les poèmes de Li Bai 李白, la lune, ainsi que le vin, est le sujet le plus intime de ce poète. D'après une étude récente, la lune se montre dans plus de 300 pièces sur un millier de vers. Evidemment il aime figurer, comme d'autres poètes chinois, la pleine lune symbolisant traditionnellement une parfaite harmonie souhaitable pour les proches séparés. Mais il confie en même temps sa nostalgie à la lune, comme on le voit dans sa *Ballade de la lune au-dessus du mont E-meï, en reconduisant Yan, moine de Shu, qui part pour le capitale* 峨眉山月歌送蜀僧晏入中京, composée vers la fin de sa vie.

Dans cette œuvre, non seulement la lune brille partout où vont l'un ou l'autre ami, Li Bai et le moine, mais elle luit toujours au-dessus du mont E-meï, qui représente leur pays natal commun Shu 蜀. On peut trouver, dans le célèbre quatrain *Pensée d'une nuit calme* 靜夜思 et quelques autres poèmes, le même lien entre la lune et la patrie du poète.

En dehors de sa femme ou de ses amis séparés par l'espace, Li Bai au clair de lune, se rappelle aussi certains personnages historiques honorables éloignés par le temps. Autrement dit, par l'intermédiaire de la lune, le poète eut parfois l'occasion de dialoguer avec les anciens, parce que la lune voit constamment, de l'antiquité jusqu'au présent, le courant de l'histoire humaine. C'est Xie Tiao 謝朓, poète distingué des Dynasties du Sud, que Li Bai évoque le plus souvent parmi les hommes anciens, à cause de la pureté de sa poésie semblable à celle du clair de lune.

Ce n'est pas qu'à Xie Tiao, cependant, que Li Bai adressa sa sympathie par le biais de la lune, mais aussi à Yu Liang 庾亮, Yuan

Hong 袁宏, Xie Shang 謝尚, Wang Hui-zhi 王徽之, Dai Kui 戴逵 et Xie An 謝安 etc. Ils appartenaient tous à la Dynastie des Jin Orientaux 東晉 dont l'atmosphère aristocratique légendaire se caractérise par l'esprit libre et le comportement dégagé. Li Bai manifeste, en effet, par ces images son sentiment commun avec eux. Parmi les poètes postérieurs des Tang, malgré sa disposition toute différente, Qian Qi 錢起 (722-780?) hérita, dans une certaine mesure, des images de lune caractérisées par Li Bai, qui évoquent certains personnalités passés.

Does Poetry create the world?:

Poetry and the Creator in the Middle Tang

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The fourfold perriodization of Tang literature was born of the attribution of an absolute value to High Tang 盛唐 poetry, and consequently the middle Tang 中唐 tends to be regarded as a period in which poetry had passed its zenith and falling into decline. But when considered in relation to the literature of the Song and later, the middle Tang displays in various aspects of literature an innovativeness that had a decisive influence on the literature of next age. Here we shall consider the way of thinking that would regard the human act of composing poetry as being equivalent or superior to the creator's act of creating the world. This idea seems to have become quite prevalent in the Song (Kazuyoshi Yamamoto, 山本和義 "The poet and the creator", *Academia-Literature and Language* 27, Nanzan University, 1979), but it probably first appeared in the middle Tang and may be considered to have coincided with major changes in literature itseif during the Middle Tang.

Han Yu 韓愈, Meng Jiao 孟郊, Bo Ju-yi 白居易, Li He 李賀 and other avantgarde poets at the time held the view in regard to their own writings and the poets of other writers of similar inclinations that poetry creates the world by means of words and that in doing so it competes with the creator and deprives him of his appointed task. Since the poet is at odds with the creator and sometimes even destroys the natural order of things, he is punished by Heaven and at times

made to suffer in the present world (—this leads to the theories of “*fa-fen-zhu-shu*” 發憤著書 and “*shi-qiong-er-hou-gong*” 詩窮而後工), but at the same time Heaven has a need for the poet who creates a world by means of words and will at times send him out into the world with his mission as a poet.

The reason for this interpretation of the act of composing poetry was probably that the established forms of literature had collapsed and writing poetry had come to be looked upon as the lonely and creative undertaking of the individual poet. The poet was liberated from the norms of the psyche and in the midst of chaos he would confront the world with language as his only resource. The birth of the concept of ‘*ku-yin*’ 苦吟 or “laborious composition” during this period is also connected with this state of affairs.

An example of this idea reflected in actual composition may be seen in Han Yu’s “*Nan-shan shi*” 南山詩, which represents a tenacious attempt to produce by means of language an entity on a par with the mountain Zhong-nan-shan 終南山 created by the creator. While, some poets attempt to describe what is invisible in the real world. It also derives from this new concept on poetry.

(Based on the English summary of “Transactions of the International conference of Orientalists in Japan No. xxxvi 1991”)

REVIEWS:

Wen Xuan OR SELECTIONS OF REFINED LITERATURE

Translated, with annotations and introduction by David R. Knechtges, Princeton, Vol. 1 1982, Vol. 2 1987.

—Mareshi SAITÔ, Kyôto University. Hiroshi TANIGUCHI, Kyôto University. Naoe HARATA, Kyôto University.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Outline of study of Zhong Rong’s “*Shi-Pin*” in China after 1980

—Yoshio SIMIZU, Ritsumeikan University.

SELECTIVE ABSTRACT OF RECENT WORKS